



United Nations Development Fund for Women

Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation in ASEAN

A Gender Perspective

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(This paper was presented as a background paper to the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development, Kuala Lumpur, 20th October 1997.)

Table of Contents

BACKGROUND	1
Why a gender perspective on rural development and poverty eradication?	2
FEMINISATION OF POVERTY	3
WOMEN AS CHANGE AGENTS FOR POVERTY ERADICATION	9
GENDER AS AN OBSTACLE FOR POOR WOMEN	12
APPROACHES TO WOMEN & POVERTY: ASEAN EXPERIENCE	15
Trickle down approach	15
Women in Development (WID) Strategy	15
Gender and Development - GAD Strategy	16
Mainstreaming	18
CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS	20
References	22

List of Tables

Table 1. Estimates of number (000) and percentage of rural women living below the poverty line	6
Table 2. Women's share of the adult labour force 1970 and 1990 (percentage)	7
Table 3. Labour force participation (percentage of working age population)	8
Table 4. Total fertility rate (TFR) 1994 and contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR), any method 1987-94	14
Table 5. Ranking on human development (HDI), gender-related development (GRDI) and gender empowerment indexes (GEM) 1997	18

BACKGROUND

Since the inception of ASEAN, member countries have achieved impressive results in rural development and poverty reduction. Between 1975 and 1995, the incidence of poverty fell by 82 per cent in Indonesia, by 90 per cent in Thailand and by 95 per cent in Malaysia [World Bank, 1997]. World Bank figures indicate that the incidence of poverty in 1995 was below 1 per cent in Malaysia and Thailand, around 11 per cent in Indonesia and 25 per cent in the Philippines. In the process of attaining these unprecedented falls in poverty, planners and policy makers have gained extensive experience in rural development and anti-poverty strategies and programmes.

The recent expansion of ASEAN has brought in countries with a rather different experience. The newest ASEAN members Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam continue to experience widespread poverty, particularly in rural areas. The incidence of poverty in Laos and Vietnam in 1995 was around 41 and 42 per cent respectively and Vietnam had the largest numbers of poor people of any ASEAN country (31.3 million) [World Bank, 1997]. Almost 90 per cent of the poor in both Laos and Vietnam live in rural areas.

In the process of successfully reducing poverty and raising rural living standards, the older ASEAN countries have accumulated a core of well-documented knowledge about the kinds of policies and programmes that worked, as well as those that were less successful. This, and the core of experience and expertise that has also been developed, could become invaluable resource for the newest member countries. The accompanying paper in this series presenting the economic perspective has enumerated in more detail the positive successes of the older ASEAN countries in reducing poverty and shown how large is the potential transfer of knowledge and experience between the older and new ASEAN members. Although women have certainly shared in the general gains in rural development and poverty reduction, like countries the world over, all the member countries of ASEAN have much to learn yet about how to fully integrated a gender perspective and women's interests and concerns into rural

development and poverty eradication. Thus, in relation to women and gender, the relevant paradigm would be a mutual learning process rather than a simple transfer of knowledge and expertise from older to newer member countries.

Why a gender perspective on rural development and poverty eradication?

There are at least four strong justifications for the inclusion of a gender perspective in the agenda for this meeting. The first relates to the commitment made by the six Member Countries of ASEAN on 5 July 1988, in signing the Declaration on the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region, a commitment that was reinforced in 1995 when all Member Countries, old and new, became signatories to the Beijing Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women. The ASEAN Declaration commits members to “promote and implement the equitable and effective participation of women whenever possible in all fields and at various levels of the political, economic, social and cultural life of society at the national, regional and international levels”. It also requires them to “enable women in the regional to undertake their important role as active agents and beneficiaries of national and regional development” and “to integrate into national plans the specific concerns of women and their roles as active agents in and beneficiaries of development, specifically considering their role as a productive force” [ASEAN, 1997].

The second justification for the inclusion of a gender perspective is that there is considerable evidence that women comprise the majority of the poor, particularly the poorest of the poor, and are more affected by poverty than men. This phenomenon has been described as the feminisation of poverty and will be discussed in detail in the first section of the paper. A third, and in some ways perhaps the most compelling justification is the extensive evidence and convincing argument that women are one of the most effective instruments for the eradication of poverty. This will be taken up in the second section of the paper. The final justification, closely related to the third, is the overwhelming argument that women are the key to the prevention of the transmission of poverty to subsequent generations.

This paper first examines, the concept of the feminisation of poverty and reviews the limited empirical evidence on the extent of poverty among women and the qualitative evidence that suggests that its impact is more severe on women. It then examines the arguments that poor women can be highly effective change agents for the eradication of poverty. However, although women may be considered as instruments for eliminating poverty, lack of understanding and appreciation of the impact of their sex roles and of gender roles and stereotypes continues to prevent the realization of this potential. Therefore, the paper moves on to summarize the differences between sex and gender and examines how both women's sex roles and the impact of gender roles and stereotypes lead to the feminisation of poverty and exclude women from full participation in development and programmes to eliminate poverty. ASEAN Member Countries, like other governments around the world, have tried a number of different approaches to deal with these issues. The paper reviews the three major approaches: women in development, or WID; gender and development or GAD; and an extension of GAD known as mainstreaming. The paper then reviews the ASEAN experience in applying these various policy approaches. Finally, it considers the issue of poverty, women and gender in the future of the expanded ASEAN, identifying prospects and specific challenges. It also advances a number of recommendations on women and gender in poverty and rural development for the consideration of policy-makers.

FEMINISATION OF POVERTY

The feminisation of poverty is a term that is extensively used in the development literature but less easily substantiated through quantitative data. The difficulty in identifying the actual numbers of poor women lies in the fact that poverty data are customarily presented only at the household level. Where poverty is measured in terms of income, it would be comparatively simple to provide a sex breakdown that would establish the proportion of women among the poor in terms of income, which is the usual conceptual basis for measuring poverty. Since income provides access to a variety of resources or, to use Sen's term, entitlements, including

decision-making power, reliable income data at an individual level could be used to measure relative poverty within the household.

However, in developing countries income data is notoriously difficult to collect and is also known to be unreliable. Consequently, the measurement of poverty in developing countries tends to rely on data obtained from expenditure surveys. Although in theory it might be possible to ascertain the sex of the person in the household responsible for each item of expenditure, the interpretation of such data is more difficult. In many societies, and certainly in most of the ASEAN countries, women are customarily responsible for the majority of routine household expenditures. However, since their role is typically one of stewardship, with most of these expenditures being for the benefit of other family members rather than the women themselves, it is more difficult to argue that sex breakdowns of expenditure data would capture the relative poverty of individual household members.

Despite such difficulties, *The State of World Rural Poverty*, compiled by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) [Jazairy, Alamgir and Panuccio, 1995], provides estimates of the numbers of rural women living below the poverty line. The study bases its estimates on the number of households headed by women, average household size and the percentage of the rural population living below the poverty line, assuming a female/male ratio in male-headed households to be 1. Table 1 indicates the proportions of women in poverty in the ASEAN countries included in the IFAD study, based on this definition. These estimates must be regarded as conservative, since there is evidence that the poorest households, even when not headed by women, have a higher proportion of women than men. There is also considerable evidence to suggest that, depending on gender relations in the particular society, the intra-household distribution of income is such that many or all of the women living in some near-poor households are in fact living below the poverty line.

Table 1 probably under-estimates the numbers of poor women and fails to provide comparable estimates for the number of poor men. Thus it does not directly allow examination of the proportion of rural women in poverty and the feminisation of poverty. However, it does show

that the numbers of women in poverty actually increased in Philippines and Thailand. Comparable male figures would be needed to establish whether these increases represent increasing feminisation of poverty. Although these are not available, the same source provides figures for the proportion of the rural population living in absolute poverty. Assuming that the definitions of “below the poverty line” and “absolute poverty” are consistent, Column 4 of Table 1 estimates the proportion of the rural poor who are women. The share of women in rural poverty ranges between a low of 55 for Philippines and a high of 73 for Malaysia.

Table 2 shows women’s share of the adult labour force over the age of 15 years for all of the current ASEAN Member Countries. It is clear that, with the exception of Thailand, women’s share as recorded in the official statistics is much higher in the newer and poorer Member Countries. To some extent, this may reflect more accurate reporting due to the greater degree of social acceptability of women working rather than real differences. Women’s share of the rural labour force would be higher than for the total in all cases, since rural communities accept the reality that women in most poor households must work to support their families.

The number of households headed by women is sometimes regarded as an indicator of the feminisation of poverty. However, although women on average earn less than men, it is by no means automatic that households headed by women should be poorer than those headed by men. Their relative poverty will depend heavily on the reasons for female household headship and the general status of female headship in the particular society. If, as in South Asia, the only women likely to live in female-headed households are those who have no choice, through the death, desertion or outmigration of the male head, and such households are completely marginalised because of their female headship, then female-headed households are likely to be poorer than male-headed households. However, even in such cases, women in poor male-headed households may actually be even poorer than those in female-headed households due to discrimination in intra-household distribution of resources. In most of Southeast Asia, female-headed households are not necessarily socially marginalised and many are female-headed by choice rather than necessity. Since female headed households are socially acceptable, a significant proportion of female heads are women with some education working in paid

employment, such as young working women sharing households with other women before marriage. The population in these households are not among the poor. At the opposite end of the scale, are those households that are female headed of necessity rather than choice.

Although they are more likely to be poor, when the average income of all persons living in female-headed households is taken into consideration, female headship is not a good indicator of poverty or of the feminisation of poverty.

Table 1. Estimates of number (000) and percentage of rural women living below the poverty line

Country	Number of rural women		Rural Population in absolute poverty 1988	Percent women in poverty
	1965-70	1988		
Indonesia	24,653	23,713	34,608	68
Malaysia	2,393	1,572	2,161	73
Philippines	6,791	12,245	22,390	55
Thailand	8,577	9,040	14,464	63

Source: Table 9.2, Idriss Jazairy, Mohiuddin Alamgir and Theresa Panuccio, *The State of World Rural Poverty: An Inquiry into Its Causes and Consequences*, New York University Press for IFAD, 1995.

Thus the direct quantitative data on the feminisation of poverty is generally rather unsatisfactory. There are, however, several indicators that do suggest feminisation of poverty:

Quantitative - women are more likely to:

- be unpaid,
- work in low wage jobs,
- earn less than men for the same work, and
- gain a smaller share of the household income.

Qualitative:

- women are responsible for family basic needs, and
- when income is insufficient, women must substitute effort for income.

Women are more likely than men to be enumerated as economically inactive or to work as unpaid family workers (See Table 3).

**Table 2. Women's share of the adult labour force
1970 and 1990 (percentage)**

Country	1970	1990
Brunei Darrusalam	na	na
Indonesia	30	39
Laos	45	47
Malaysia	31	36
Myanmar	44	44
Philippines	33	37
Singapore	26	38
Thailand	48	47
Vietnam	48	50

Source: Table 16 , UNDP, *Human Development Report*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Even among women in paid employment, a higher proportion of women than men are concentrated in low wage jobs. IFAD estimates that in Asia, excluding China and India, women in agriculture are paid only 54 per cent of the male wage (48 per cent in non-agriculture) [Jazairy, et al, 1995: Table 9.5]. Finally, despite most of the ASEAN countries having signed

the Convention Eliminating All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and many having equal pay for equal work legislation, women are still likely to be paid less than men even when they do the same work. Extensive studies also show that women producers have poorer access than men to all resources, from land to credit and technology. All these factors suggest that women are likely to comprise the majority of the poor and constitute a compelling case for accepting that the feminisation of poverty is a quantitative reality.

**Table 3. Labour force participation
(percentage of working age population)**

Country	Labour force participation rate		Female proportion of unpaid family workers
	Women	Men	Women
Brunei Darussalam	na	na	na
Indonesia	41	73	68
Laos	na	na	na
Malaysia	35	75	64
Myanmar	39	74	na
Philippines	47	82	46
Singapore			50
Thailand	65	84	66
Vietnam	62	82	na

Source: Asian Development Bank, *Key Indicators of Developing Asian and Pacific Countries, 1996* and ASEAN, *The Advancement of Women in ASEAN, A Regional Report, 1997*.

The feminisation of poverty can also be viewed from a qualitative perspective. Rural women are not only the majority of the rural poor, but their poverty is likely to be aggravated by factors and processes that do not affect men. Due to cultural factors, intra-household distribution of food and other resources is far from equal. In the distribution of food, women in Southeast Asia tend to give priority to their husbands and other adult males and to their children. In the context of poverty and food shortages, this results in higher levels of malnutrition, anaemia and related health problems among poor women than among poor men. Although cultural norms require men to fulfill the role of breadwinner, the reality when men are unable to provide sufficient income is that it is the women who are ultimately responsible for ensuring the survival of their children. With or without the income that the husband is expected to provide, women are responsible for feeding, clothing, sheltering and educating their children. Thus, poverty threatens women's primary role as mother. Poor women struggle to ensure survival in a variety of ways: by accepting the lowest paid and most arduous jobs as a last resort and by substituting their own time and effort to provide basic subsistence for their families, often by toiling long hours in backbreaking work with extremely low productivity. The increasing prevalence in the ASEAN region of such phenomena as male outmigration, family breakdown and the declining role of the extended family as a safety net and support group further exacerbates the qualitative impact of poverty on women.

WOMEN AS CHANGE AGENTS FOR POVERTY ERADICATION

Rural women play a key role in their societies at three levels. At the aggregate level, as members of the labour force (whether counted or under-enumerated), they are an important, and with development an increasingly important, source of labour. Through their domestic roles, they contribute significantly to the capacity of the male members of their households to function effectively in the labour force. At the household level, they are producers of both marketed and unmarketed goods and services, much of which is either under-enumerated or not included in the national accounts. Due to their vulnerability, women particularly value security. As a result, they are also an important source of savings and capital accumulation and

often more effective savers than men. At the inter-generational level, as the bearers and rearers of the next generation of workers and citizens, they are critical change agents assuming the primary responsibility for children's health and nutrition and most of the early processes of socialisation.

Women are thus of critical importance for poverty alleviation at all three levels. At the national level, their contribution to the labour force as workers contributes to the national welfare and income, although a significant part of their contribution is uncounted [Waring, 1988], and much of the rest is under-counted. Various estimates suggest that, if women's productive and reproductive activities were fully incorporated into the national accounts, women would be found to contribute between 30 and 40 per cent of Gross National Product.

At the household level, their role is particularly important because poverty is typically, among other things, a consequence of the low productivity of the main income earner. As a result of their lack of education and skills, the poorest households often need more than one income merely to survive. The role of women in contributing directly to the income of poor households is important both quantitatively and qualitatively. In terms of quantity, the income provided by women is often either the mainstay of poor households or a substantial component of total income. Resource-poor households are even more dependent than others on women's labour in the subsistence food sector and/or their earnings from wage labour or non-farm enterprises [Jazairy, Alamgir and Panuccio, 1995: 275]. In terms of quality, numerous micro-studies show that most of the income earned by women goes directly toward meeting the needs of their families, particularly their children. Very little if any is used to meet women's personal needs. By contrast, even in the poorest households, a portion (sometimes a large part) of men's earnings is used for personal needs such as cigarettes, alcohol and other social activities.

Equally important at the household level are women's indirect contributions to household income. Women's domestic roles as wives and mothers support and enhance the capacity of male family members and working female children to undertake economic activity. Poor women also often make an important indirect contribution to household income by substituting

long hours of laborious drudgery gathering fuel and water, toiling in low yield subsistence cultivation, or collecting field and forest foods in order to save direct cash outlays. The poorer the household, the longer the hours worked by women in such low-yield activities.

Finally, in their role as mothers, poor women may be the instruments through which their own poverty is transmitted to their sons and daughters (particularly the latter). Women who are struggling to ensure the survival of their families may be forced to neglect the nutrition and health of young children and often experience higher levels of infant mortality. Alternatively, with the aid of appropriate development programmes, poor women can be the means of providing their children with good nutrition and health and access to education. Research has shown conclusively that education and health are the keys to eradicating poverty in the current generation and to preventing the transmission of poverty to the next generation. Research has also shown that mothers are the principle influence on children's nutrition, health and education. Thus, women can become critical agents of change in anti-poverty programmes.

GENDER AS AN OBSTACLE FOR POOR WOMEN

However, poor women in particular are seriously constrained in their capacity to contribute to family income and to act as change agents by the impact of gender roles and stereotypes. Gender affects women's participation in development in three basic ways. First, the specific gender roles of each sex affects their needs and priorities. For example, because of their gender roles as wives and mothers, women have a greater need than men for convenient access to clean water, health clinics and inputs such as efficient stoves and electricity to improve the productivity of their domestic work. Men, because of their role as family breadwinner, are likely to give higher priority to good roads to provide access to markets and to agricultural infrastructure. Poor women particularly suffer from the lack of attention and low priority given to women's needs as a result of women's low level of participation in decision-making. Poor women would benefit more than most other women from inputs to improve access to clean

water and health care and from the public provision of facilities such as electricity that improve the productivity¹ and reduce the drudgery of domestic work. Their children, particularly daughters, benefit most from the public provision of basic education, since they are unlikely to have access to alternative sources of education. The public provision of water, electricity and other public services, which particularly benefit women and families, is highly correlated with poverty reduction. Part of the success of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand in poverty reduction must be ascribed to their comparatively high levels of investment in public facilities and services.

The second way in which gender affects women's participation in development is through the effect of gender stereotypes on the assumptions made by development programmes about their clients. For example, departments of agriculture expect that farmers will be men and design extension services accordingly. Despite the fact that a significant and increasing proportion of farmers are women, it has been estimated that less than 1 per cent of extension agents throughout Asia are women². Gender stereotypes also lead policy-makers and development programmers to assume that women are primarily housewives who stay at home and do no productive work. Thus, health and family planning programmes fail to adjust clinic times to the reality that most of the poorest women in villages are out working in the fields, gathering fuel or engaged in off-farm work. Similarly, government programmes delivered through community development and women's organisations such as the Family Welfare Movement in Indonesia or the Women's Unions in Laos and Vietnam are often not readily accessible to the poorest women because of their heavy burden of domestic and productive work.

¹Even a single electric light bulb, which may be all that the poorest can afford, can extend the hours during which women can carry out domestic and productive work. Studies have shown that the provision of electricity is highly correlated with poverty reduction.

²In fairness to departments of agriculture, it also needs to be said that the impact of gender on career choices and work expectations for women actually makes it quite difficult to get women to train as extension agents and then to retain them in rural areas once they have been trained. In Indonesia, only a comparatively small proportion of the small numbers of women who have trained in agricultural extension were found to be working in rural areas.

Finally, gender affects women's participation in development because the heavy burden of domestic and reproductive work, particularly child care, is often an obstacle to women's participation in employment and programmes and their access to services. High fertility and the consequent burden of the associated gender roles for women particularly handicap poor women, who tend to have the highest levels of fertility. Much of the success of the Indonesia and Thailand in reducing poverty and the impact of poverty on women is undoubtedly due to the success of the national family planning programmes in achieving a substantial and sustained fertility decline. Among the new ASEAN Member Countries, Laos in particular with a total fertility rate of 6.7 (UNDP, 1997) stands to gain much from technical support from and sharing the experience of Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand in the provision of family planning services [Table 5]. Myanmar and Vietnam, although having lower fertility rates, would similarly benefit because of considerable variation by region and income and because of the limited range of methods currently in use.

Poor women in particular suffer from the burden of gender roles and stereotypes and the impact of certain gender-blind policies. They also benefit least from gender-blind development programmes. A major component of poverty eradication and rural development strategies in ASEAN, among both the established and the new Member Countries, must be the development of gender awareness among policy makers, planners and programmers.

Table 4. Total fertility rate (TFR) 1994 and contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR), any method 1987-94

Country	TFR	CPR
Brunei Darrusalam	2.9	na
Indonesia	2.8	55
Laos	6.7	19
Malaysia	3.5	na
Myanmar	3.4	17
Philippines	3.9	40
Singapore	1.8	74
Thailand	1.8	74
Vietnam	3.2	65

Source: Table 22, UNDP, *Human Development Report*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

APPROACHES TO WOMEN & POVERTY: ASEAN EXPERIENCE

Trickle down approach: The experience of the ASEAN countries has generally mirrored the global pattern in approaches to women and poverty. Initially, before the international decade for women and the First World Conference on Women began to draw attention to the situation of women, it was generally assumed that the benefits of development would be shared equally between women and men. In this version of the “trickle down” theory, no specific attempts were made to direct programmes or projects toward women and there was no recognition, beyond the obvious areas of family planning and maternal and child health, that women’s needs

or concerns might be different from those of men. Anti-poverty strategies such as the FELDA land resettlement schemes in Malaysia and the transmigration programme in Indonesia initially made little provision for women and children but focussed on the family unit, assuming that all members would benefit equally. At that time, social and economic data were typically provided to planners and policy makers only for population aggregates, except in the case of variables thought to be related to fertility.

Women in Development (WID) Strategy: Gradually, during the UN Decade for Women, governments and development agencies began to recognize the role of women in development (WID) as a special issue of policy concern. However, the general perception of WID as a development strategy was one of women as a “disadvantaged group” in need of improved welfare through projects targeting and involving women only. Such projects were quite marginal in the overall scheme of policy-making and programming, attracting a very small share of the total budget of agencies, donors and governments - less than 1 per cent in most cases. They typically related to women’s traditional gender roles as wives and mothers, providing women with clean water, health and family planning education and services and basic literacy to help them provide better for their family’s basic needs. Where income generation was included in WID strategies, it also tended to focus on traditional areas of work for women such as food preparation and processing, sewing, weaving and handicrafts.

One important outcome of the WID Approach in most of the ASEAN countries was the establishment of national machineries for women in the form of Divisions, Departments and ultimately Ministries to deal with women’s affairs. In some countries, the responsibility for WID projects initially rested with these agencies. In others, their role was more in terms of coordinating and monitoring the WID projects of the line departments in the various sectors. The perception of women’s issues as welfare issues was reflected in the tendency in many countries to locate the women’s machineries in Ministries of Welfare or Social Affairs. However, in ASEAN countries they were located more centrally in the Prime Minister’s Department (Thailand, Malaysia) or directly under the President (Indonesia, Philippines).

Gender and Development - GAD Strategy: The Second World Conference on Women in 1985 reviewed the approach to the role of women in development and found that the impact of projects and programmes on the lives and problems that women faced was marginal. The Conference document, the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, women's role in development in more positive terms, emphasizing their actual and potential contributions to development rather than their welfare needs. Development practitioners and theorists began to realize that the essence of the problem was not women *per se*, but the differences between women and men. It was also increasingly recognized that the causes of these differences were to be found in relationships between women and men -- that is, in the prevailing socially and culturally determined gender relations³. As this paradigm shift took hold, the WID approach was gradually replaced, at least in terms of rhetoric, by the gender and development (GAD) or gender approach.

One particular ASEAN country, the Philippines, was a pioneer in this strategic shift, not only within the region but also in global terms. The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women was established within government by a small core of dedicated women from academic and NGO backgrounds. Working in and through the bureaucracy, they gradually developed a national gender strategy based on the widespread use of gender training and gender analysis, both targeted specifically at economic planners in the national planning body and in key sectoral agencies. With support from international development agencies such as

³Gender is a scientific term derived from anthropology. It refers to the social and cultural norms and roles that societies ascribe to members of each sex. In each society, there are expected roles and norms that women and men are expected to adhere to that are not determined by sex. For example, women are typically expected to be the housewife providing domestic care to their families while men are expected to be the breadwinner. However, a man can provide domestic care and a woman can be the breadwinner. Related to gender roles are norms about such things as dress and appearance, behaviour and attitudes. These differ between societies and change over time. For example, in some societies women wear skirts and men wear trousers, while in others men wear skirts (sarung, dhoti) and women wear trousers (salwar kameez). Women may be expected to be gentle, emotional and quiet, while men may be expected to be strong, aggressive and rational. However, some men may be gentle, emotional and quiet and some women may be strong, aggressive and rational.

UNIFEM and CIDA Canada, they began to institutionalize gender training and gender analysis in the national system of development planning management and administration. The Commission also worked with the National Statistics Coordination Board and the National Statistics Office to provide planners with sex-disaggregated statistics highlighting differences between women and men and directed toward gender issues. More recently, they have begun to work on the collection of new statistics on gender issues such as time allocation and unpaid work and violence against women.

A key component of the entire approach was the desire to make national development planning and programming more responsive to the needs of poor women and thus more effective in poverty alleviation. Since the development of the Commission and the gender-responsive approach to planning coincided with major political turmoil and a serious economic recession, it is difficult to judge the extent to which the strategy has been successful. Although the incidence of poverty in the Philippines remains the highest among the older ASEAN Member Countries, the country scored relatively well on the United Nations gender-related indexes. The Philippines was ranked as 98 on the HDI, which reflects the general level of human development, 84 on the GRDI, which reflects the level of women's human development, and 35 on the GEM, which reflects women's participation in decision-making [Table 5]. It seems likely that in the absence of the gender strategy, the impact of poverty on women in the Philippines may have been even greater.

Table 5. Ranking on human development (HDI), gender-related development (GRDI) and gender empowerment indexes (GEM) 1997

	HDI	GRDI	GEM
Brunei Darussalam	38	na	na
Indonesia	99	86	59
Laos	136	114	na
Malaysia	60	45	48
Myanmar	131	110	na
Philippines	98	81	35
Singapore	26	27	47
Thailand	59	39	52
Vietnam	121	101	na

Source: Tables 1-2, UNDP, *Human Development Report*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997.

Mainstreaming: This systematic and across-the-board application of a gender approach in the Philippines also yielded the concept of mainstreaming, popularized among others by UNIFEM [UNIFEM, 1987]. The concept refers to the need to include a gender approach and concern for women's needs and concerns in all sectors and areas of programming and decision-making. Gradually, the focus on advancing the status of women through a gender approach is moving out of the social sectors into the mainstream macro economic agencies and sectoral departments.

The need for mainstreaming has become more apparent as economic analysis increasingly reveals the extent to which gender-blind macro-economic policies and sectoral programmes have exacerbated and feminized poverty in many countries in recent years. The State of World Rural Poverty [Jazairy, Alamgir and Panuccio, 1995] reported that the incidence of poverty among women was increasing at the global level. This must be attributed in part to the impact

of gender-blind structural adjustment programmes in many countries. It is noteworthy that in the Philippines, the only ASEAN country to experience major structural reform and an externally-imposed adjustment package, the number of poor women almost doubled between 1965-70 and 1988 [see Table 1]. The strong growth record of the other older ASEAN Member Countries enabled them to avoid structural adjustment programmes in the past. However, the current currency crisis in the region may well lead to similar programmes in the future. It is thus especially important that the ASEAN countries mainstream a gender approach at the macro economic level, in order to avoid further feminization of poverty and the negative impact that must have on human development in general.

The inclusion of a gender perspective in the three papers presented at this meeting on rural development and poverty alleviation is an indication of the extent of progress that has been made in ASEAN. However, although there has been a change in the rhetoric in most countries and significant changes in the policy approach in the Philippines and in some sectors in other countries, much remains to be done to put the rhetoric of gender-responsive development and mainstreaming into effective practice in ways that will benefit poor rural women.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has reviewed the ASEAN experience of rural development and poverty reduction from a gender perspective. The older ASEAN countries have achieved considerable success in rural development and in reducing poverty. However, the only available estimates from IFAD suggest that they have been less successful in reducing the proportion of women among the remaining poor. It may seem surprising that the Philippines, with the highest overall level of poverty, has apparently been most successful in reducing the proportion of women among the poor. However, the Philippines is also the leading country in the region (and even at a global level among developing countries) in terms of gender-sensitive and gender-responsive policy making, planning and programming. This underlines the importance for all ASEAN countries, both the older and the new, of incorporating a gender perspective into their poverty eradication policies and programmes and of actively involving women as decision makers.

The challenges ahead for ASEAN are:

- ▶ for all ASEAN member countries to integrate into policy formulation, planning and programming recognition of the active roles that poor women now play in contributing to family incomes, national wealth creation and the development of the nation's human capital;
- ▶ for the more developed ASEAN Member Countries that have experienced considerable success in reducing poverty to share their experiences with the less developed Member Countries, particularly in respect of those strategies that have yielded the greatest benefits for women;
- ▶ for all ASEAN Member Countries to work together to more fully integrate a gender perspective and an active role for women in decision making in rural development and poverty eradication.

The recommendations that emerge from the paper closely reflect these challenges. They are that the ASEAN Member Countries;

- ◆ take active steps to share and further develop and refine development strategies and programmes that will benefit poor women and thus contribute to the eradication of poverty in this generation and the next.
- ◆ consider the establishment of a permanent forum for the exchange and development of information, research, strategies and programmes on rural development and poverty eradication;
- ◆ ensure that a proper recognition of the productive and domestic roles of poor women in rural development and a gender perspective is integrated throughout the work of such a forum;
- ◆ encourage the collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated statistics and data on gender issues such as the extent and importance of women's unpaid work, particularly in rural areas, in order to provide a better information base for policy formulation and programming;
- ◆ encourage the conduct of public information campaigns in rural areas to increase recognition of the extent and importance of women's productive work with a view to improving the accuracy of data on women's labour force participation.

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Feminisation of Poverty

- ▶ Quantitative dimension
- ▶ Qualitative dimension

Quantitative: little direct data

but women are more likely to

- ▶ be unpaid
- ▶ work in low wage jobs
- ▶ earn less than men for same work
- ▶ gain a smaller share of household income

Qualitative:

- ▶ women are responsible for family basic needs
- ▶ when income is insufficient, women must substitute effort for income

Box 1.

Sex and Gender

Sex is

- ▶ biological, fixed at conception
- ▶ described as Male / Female
- ▶ data should be disaggregated by Sex to show differences between women and men



Gender is

- ▶ social and cultural
- ▶ changes over time
- ▶ described as masculine / feminine
- ▶ refers to norms, roles and stereotypes
- ▶ differs between countries and cultures
- ▶ differences in sex-disaggregated data often result from effect of gender norms and roles



Box 2

Strategies for advancement of women

Trickle down

- ▶ women in families
- ▶ FELDA Malaysia, transmigration
Indonesia
- ▶ women in family planning, Thailand,
Indonesia



Women in Development WID

- ▶ welfare oriented, women as
disadvantaged group
- ▶ focussed on women only,
traditional roles
- ▶ marginal - small budgets, little
impact



Gender & Development GAD

- ▶ problem is gap between
women and men
- ▶ due to unequal gender relations
- ▶ should focus on women and men
- ▶ seek more equal gender relations
- ▶ increase women's status relative
to men
- ▶ mainstreaming in all sectors



Box 3

Gender affects women's participation in development

Gender roles affect needs

- ▶ poor women as mothers and housewives need access to health clinics, family planning and water
- ▶ poor men as main breadwinners need roads and transport to access markets
- ▶ poor women and poor men as farmers need better technologies, and agricultural extension



Expectations

- ▶ the agricultural department expects farmers to be men
BUT many women are farmers
- ▶ stereotypes affect career choice - "a woman cannot be a pilot"
BUT Indonesia has a woman astronaut
- ▶ the health department directs child health messages to mothers BUT some children are cared for by fathers or grannies



Women's multiple & simultaneous roles cause role conflict

- ▶ women's 24 hour a day role in child care may restrict access to work or training etc. because of timing or location
- ▶ women's overlooked roles in agriculture may interfere with their access to health clinics and other services because of timing
- ▶ poor women's role in collecting fuel and water may restrict access to work etc.



Box 4


OVERHEADS:

1

Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation in ASEAN

A Gender Perspective

Lorraine Corner UNIFEM


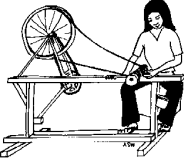


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2

Outline

- feminisation of poverty
- women change agents for poverty eradication
- gender as an obstacle for poor women
- policy approaches to women and poverty
- Challenges & recommendations

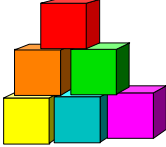




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3

Feminisation of Poverty

- Two dimensions
 - Quantitative
 - Qualitative

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4

Women majority of poor

little direct data

Percentage of poor who are women

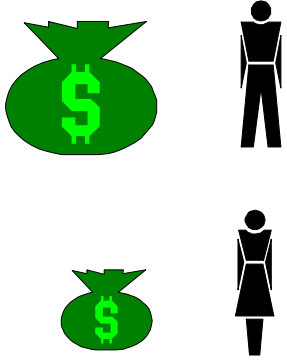
Country	Percent
Indonesia	68
Malaysia	73
Philippines	55
Thailand	63

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Indirect data

Women are more likely to:

- be unpaid
- work in low wage jobs
- earn less for same work
- get smaller share of household income




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Women more affected by poverty

Women:

- responsible for - survival of children
- poverty threatens their primary roles
- must substitute time & effort for income

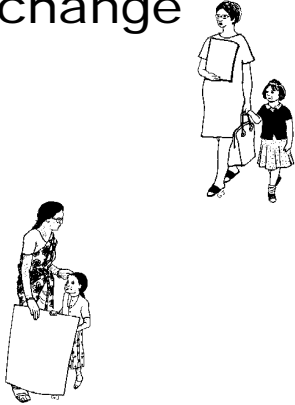


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7

Poor women as key agents of change

- poor need two incomes
- women spend their earnings on families
- women → key to education & health
- education/health → key to poverty eradication



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8

Women contribute to rural economy

- women *are* farmers
- economic activity under-reported
- female labour force rate increasing
- many in non-farm & informal sector

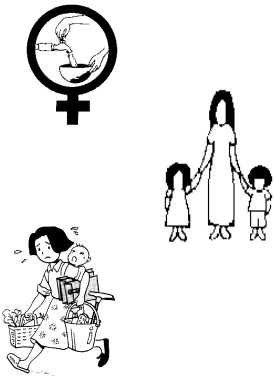


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9

Gender an obstacle for poor women

- gender needs not recognised
- gender stereotypes make them invisible
- role conflict restricts access to work and programs




The illustration shows a woman in the foreground pushing a shopping basket, looking stressed. In the background, a woman stands with two children, representing a family. Above the woman with the basket is a female symbol (a circle with a vertical line and a horizontal line) containing a globe, symbolizing the intersection of gender and global issues.

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10

Advancement of Women: policy approaches

- trickle down
- women in development - WID
- gender and development - GAD
- mainstreaming




The illustration depicts a group of seven women sitting around a table, engaged in a discussion or meeting. They are looking at documents on the table, representing collaborative policy-making or community development.

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11

Women/Gender: ASEAN Experience

- Trickle down - women in families, FELDA, transmigration
- WID - clean water, MCH, basic needs, sewing, crafts, food processing
- GAD - gender-responsive planning, Philippines



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12

ASEAN - gender indices


	Poverty %	Female %poor	GRDI	GEM
Singapore	neg		27	47
Brunei Darussalam				
Thailand	1	63	39	52
Malaysia	1	73	45	48
Philippines	25	55	81	35
Indonesia	11	68	86	59
Vietnam			101	
Myanmar			110	
Laos			114	

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13

Challenges for ASEAN

- recognise poor women's economic & domestic roles in policy & programmes
- share experience & strategies, especially on women's poverty
- integrate gender & women's needs into policy & programs

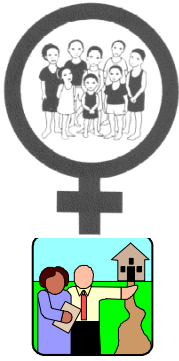


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14

Recommendations

- share/refine strategies to benefit poor women
- consider permanent forum & use gender approach
- use gender statistics for policy and planning
- encourage public recognition of roles of poor & rural women



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